

IN THE CLAIMS

The following is a detailed listing of all claims that are, or were, in the application. A status identifier is provided for every claim and the current text of every claim is presented, unless the claim has been cancelled. Current amendments to the claims are expressed in the detailed listing by strike through or brackets (for deleted matter) or underlining (for added matter).

1. (Currently Amended) A method of operating a vending machine, comprising:
receiving, from a customer, a request for a transaction ~~from a customer~~ at the vending machine;
identifying a ~~condition~~ state of a service queue at a retail establishment; and
~~based on the identified condition~~, outputting ~~an offer~~ to the customer at the vending machine, a coupon that is redeemable at the retail establishment, in response to the received request, based on the identified state of a service queue at the retail establishment in response to the received request.
2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the outputted ~~[[offer]] coupon~~ includes a coupon to be redeemed is redeemable at the retail establishment.
3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the outputted ~~[[offer]] coupon~~ includes a redemption code.
4. – 8. (Cancelled)
9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the request is for dispensing a product from the vending machine.
10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of storing at the vending machine data representative of the ~~[[offer]] coupon~~.

11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of selecting the ~~[[offer]]~~ coupon from among a plurality of ~~offers~~ coupons.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, wherein the selecting step includes generating a selection signal at the retail establishment.

13. (Currently Amended) A method of operating a vending machine, comprising:
receiving, ~~from a customer,~~ a request to dispense an item ~~for a transaction from a customer~~ at the vending machine;
determining whether the item ~~requested transaction~~ can be ~~performed~~ dispensed by the vending machine; and
if it is determined that the ~~requested transaction~~ item cannot be ~~performed~~ dispensed by the vending machine, outputting to the customer ~~an offer~~ a coupon for the item ~~to the customer~~ to be redeemed at a retail establishment ~~in response to the received request~~.

14. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, wherein the outputted ~~offer is a coupon to be redeemed~~ is redeemable at a retail establishment.

15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, wherein the ~~[[offer]]~~ coupon is outputted only when a predetermined condition is identified at ~~[[a]]~~ the retail establishment.

16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 13, wherein the determining step includes determining whether the vending machine is out of stock of ~~[[an]]~~ the item ~~requested in the request for a transaction~~.

17. (Currently Amended) A method of operating a vending machine, comprising:
determining a state of a service queue at a retail establishment;
in response to the determined ~~condition~~ state, transmitting a ~~trigger~~ signal to the vending machine from the retail establishment; and
in response to the ~~trigger~~ signal, outputting ~~an offer~~ to a customer at the vending machine a coupon that is redeemable at the retail establishment.
18. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 17, wherein the ~~[[offer]]~~ coupon is outputted upon the customer requesting a transaction at the vending machine.
19. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 17, wherein the ~~trigger~~ signal is transmitted by a human operator.
20. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 17, wherein the ~~trigger~~ signal is generated and transmitted automatically.
21. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 17, wherein the ~~trigger~~ signal is transmitted directly from the retail establishment to the vending machine.
22. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 17, wherein the ~~trigger~~ signal is transmitted from the retail establishment to the vending machine by way of a controller located remotely from the retail establishment.

23. (Currently Amended) A system for selectively causing a vending machine to output [[offers]] coupons, the system comprising:

detection means that are located at a retail establishment for detecting whether a predetermined condition exists at the retail establishment; and

a vending machine including:

offer means for selectively outputting ~~an offer~~ a coupon.[[;]]

the offer means selective upon the detection of the predetermined condition.

~~detection means located at a retail establishment for detecting a condition at the retail establishment; and~~

~~communication means for allowing data communication between said detection means and said offer means.~~

24. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 23, further comprising communication means for allowing data communication between said detection means and said offer means, wherein said communication means includes a controller connected for data communication with said detection means and said offer means.

25. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 23, wherein said vending machine is installed outside said retail establishment.

26. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 25, wherein said vending machine is located remotely from said retail establishment.

27. (Currently Amended) A system for selectively causing a vending machine to output ~~offers~~ coupons, the system comprising:

trigger means for generating a signal at a retail establishment; and

a vending machine including:

offer means for selectively outputting ~~an offer~~ a coupon;

~~trigger means for generating a trigger signal at a retail establishment; and~~

~~transmission means for transmitting the trigger signal from said retail establishment to said vending machine;~~
said offer means being responsive to said ~~trigger~~ signal by outputting ~~an offer~~ a coupon upon the vending machine receiving a transaction request.

28. (Currently Amended) A method of operating a vending machine, comprising:

detecting, via the vending machine, a customer in proximity to the vending machine;

identifying a condition at a retail establishment; and

based on the identified condition, outputting ~~an offer~~ to the detected customer, a coupon that that is redeemable at the retail establishment.

29. (New) A method of operating a vending machine, comprising:

determining whether a predetermined condition exists at a plurality of retail establishments;

transmitting a signal to the vending machine,

the transmitting in response to the existence of the

predetermined condition at at least one of the

plurality of retail establishments;

in response to the signal, selecting one retail establishment from the at least one of the

plurality of retail establishments; and

outputting to a customer at the vending machine an offer that that is redeemable at the one selected retail establishment.